

A
 REVIEW
 OF THE
 STATE
 OF THE
 BRITISH NATION.

Thursday, November 3. 1709.

I Have in some of my late Papers given you some Warnings about the Plague and Famine, that are now in their Turn visiting the North of Europe. — Indeed I think, I need say little more about the Peace of the North. — The Prince of Kings seems to be going a Way to work with those Potentates, as will most effectually keep the Peace among them: I cannot but think, the King of Prussia, a wise, and religious, as well as a generous Prince, will find but little Inclination to a War with Sweden, if the Plague breaks in upon his Dominions, as we see it has begun to do in a terrible manner. — Our last Advices from those Parts tell us, (as our Gazette expresses it) That the Plague rages in Königsberg, the Capital of the Brandenburg Prussia. If GOD goes on to visit Europe in this manner, he will reduce them all to Peace; and really it must be own'd, it seems strange, the People on that side can talk of War, and invading one another, when this dreadful Enemy is invading them all. — By the most modest Computation I can make from the publick Accounts, about 50000 People have dy'd in the City of Danzig, 17000 in Warsaw, and unknown Numbers in the Country about. — What Havock it will make in Königsberg, GOD only knows, and whither it will spread from thence.

I will tell you no more of the Probabilities of its reaching among us. — It is most true,

true, that we want some extraordinary Methods to reconcile us in *Europe*, but especially in this Island, where our Feuds tend to the destroying, not the late-made Union only, but even all Sorts of Union among us—GOD grant we may be made Friends, and united by some less terrible Means than that of a Plague.

Famine, as I have noted, has been a Fore-runner of this Distemper in many Parts—And great Endeavours have been made to persuade us, that we have had a Dearth among us—when we have not—I have indeed with some Warmth complain'd of this, and laid the Fault in part upon the Justices of the Peace in the Country not doing their Duty—I appeal to all, that can consider and read this Paper impartially, whether it was not enough to move any reasonable Man's Passion, and whether it might not plead a full Excuse for me in my reproaching the Neglect of Justice, in the Persons to whom Justice was committed in *England*, to hear from *London*, that Corn was at three times the Price it us'd to be. Let them consider I have travell'd thro' the Heart of *England* quite to *Edinburgh*, besides some Deviations upon the Road; that in every Place I saw Corn enough, in many Places extraordinary Crops, and in no Place a Dearth, or any thing like it—And that yet I should find Corn rise in this manner!

I saw manifestly, that it was owing to Corn-Jobbing, to Trick-Artifice, and meer Craft of Buyers and Sellers—And this again to the Omissions of those, whose Duty and Office it was to prevent it, and to cure it—To this Work, I found it a Duty to alarm them, I hope, it has in part done it. And the effectual Application of the Justices of Peace of *Middlesex* to this Work is both a Testimony of the Need there is, that all the Justices in *England* should follow their happy Example; and also an Evidence, that if they did so, the Price of Corn would presently fall among us.

I am told, a new Author in Town charges me with attempting to raise the Mobb for this Work—I abhor Mobbs, Tumult and Riot were never my Element, nor

has any thing, I ever wrote in my Life, tended towards Rabble; I have had my Share in suppressing Rabbles, and preventing them, as at *Coventry*, at *Edinburgh*, and elsewhere—May they that love Mobbs try them as I have done—But pressing the Magistrates to do this Work can never be exciting the Mobb—If I know any thing, it is the Way to prevent the Mobb—And really, the Justices omitting to do this Work, is the readiest Way in the World to bring the Rabble to do it for them—For the Poor are the People most sensibly pinch'd by the Dearthness of Corn, and they ever clamour loudest, and rise soonest, when they want Bread—Hunger is very importuning, and the poor People are generally but too forward to raise Tumults in such Cases.

To prevent this, it is the Work of the Magistrates to redress the Wrong, and put the Laws in Execution—Now, that this was not done, is most plain; since no sooner did our Justices in *Middlesex* begin—and Indictments and Presentments are made against the Engrossers, Fore-stallers, &c. but the Effect was plain—Corn immediately fell—The Blessing of the Poor, and of him that was ready to perish, be upon ye all, among the Magistracy that put your Hands to this Work—And assure your selves, prevent but engrossing and withholding Corn in and from the Markets—You will soon find, Plenty, and a cheap Price will follow—For as certain—as that the Sun is in the Firmament, you are so far from a real Scarcity in *England*, that ye have a vast and inexhaustible Store—And for *Scotland*—I am now upon the Spot, and do assure you—not from my own Observation only, but from the general Opinion, they have had more Corn this Year, (and a better Season for curing and getting it in also) than they had both the preceding Years—And yet either of those Years were counted plentiful, and Corn was sold very cheap all the while.

All our Dearthness then is an Alarm of Want, and blessed be GOD, it was a false Alarm—I would, to conclude it, only recommend two Things to you all in *England*; First, That all the Justices would follow

follow the Example of those in *Middlesex*, and carefully put the Laws in Execution, than which nothing can contribute more to the Relief of the poor People—and they will soon see the Markets supply'd—

Secondly, That you would reflect, how unthankful it is to the bountiful Hand of our Maker, who has given us Plenty, when our Neighbours are distress'd, that we should make a Sort of sham Scarcity among ourselves, as if he could not with Ease visit us with Scarcity at his Pleasure.

And thus I end my Remarks upon this Subject— If any think, I have been too rude with our Magistrates, *my Answer is short*, I reverence Authority as much as any Man—and am not for reviling the

Rulers of the People— But I cannot but say, and I speak it with Concern, so many of our Immoralities and Inconveniences lie at the Door of our Justices of the Peace, either in their Neglect to punish at all, Partiality where they do punish, or dreadful Example, That I entreat the Remarker of this Paper, not to put me to the Necessity of vindicating the Warmth I have shewn, by exposing the Nakedness of this Nation in those Particulars; when they reform their own Practice and Example, I'll be the first that shall do them Honour; but GOD forbid, I should cease to cry out of that, which I am sure cries *elsewhere* for a speedy Regulation, or threatens with a terrible Animadversion.

MISCELLANEA.

I Cannot but subjoyn to this Paper a short Observation to a new Author, who has entertain'd us a while upon the Subject of regulating the Press— It seems strange to me, to see that Gentleman positively load the WHIG—with an Aversion to such a Law—whereas I dare say, if a reasonable Proposal were made in Parliament for such a Law, there would not be one *Whig* against it— It is true, this is no Argument— But the Case is plain, it is so just a Law, so consonant to Liberty, so agreeable to a Revolution-Principle, so considerable an Article in Defence of Property, that no *Whig* can be against it—without ceasing to be what we call a *Whig*, that is, a Man careful of preserving Property— And therefore I recommend it to that Gentleman at his next Conference with his imaginary Club, to examine, who they were who dropt the last Bill in the House, I mean, who privately declin'd it, and so procur'd it to be dropt.

Now, if he does not find, these were either the *High Party*, or some Persons concern'd in Patents and limited Properties, who, the A& being but Temporary, thought their Property would at the End of the Term be laid more open than it

was before— If, I say, he does not find, these were the Men that were the Cause of that Miscarriage, then I am mistaken— And if he does, then he is partial and unjust, in telling us the *Whigs* will oppose it.

The Truth is, it has hitherto been neither a *Whig* or a *Tory* Cause—but a meer Piece of Booksellers Conduct— The Practice is the Shame and Scandal of the present Time—and gives a Liberty to daily Invasions of Property equal in Villany, to robbing a House, or plundering an Hospital. Nor is this all; it is a Discouragement to Industry, a Dishonour to Learning, and a Cheat upon the whole Nation. By this Practice, a Man, who has study'd several Years to perform the most elaborate Work; has perhaps been at 500 l. Charge to print it, besides all the other Pains, and to whom such a Work might otherwise be an Inheritance, and to his Family, has his Labour destroy'd, his Expences lost, and his Copy re-printed by sham and pyratrical Booksellers and Printers, who eat the Gain of the poor Man's Labour, destroy and spoil the Work it self, cheat the Buyer by performing it imperfect, and ruin the laborious Author.

Upon